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In Response

Behavior, Psychology, and Praxics: Where Does Science Fit In?

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The science of behavior as proposed by Skinner (1953) and Kantor (1959) involves, at its core, an organized, interactive system of psychology. Behavior scientists who follow Skinner and Kantor can therefore identify themselves rightly as psychologists. Since not all psychologists can, however, identify themselves as behaviorists, we have a problem of terminology and ideology. According to both Skinner and Kantor, the science of behavior is derived from our knowledge of how the individual responds to the conditions and objects of the surrounding world. The conventional psychology which dominates Departments of Psychology has taken bits and pieces of these conditions and objects, and then rationalized the connections between them. This is organized common sense, not science. Pre-Copernican astronomy, wherein the Earth was seen as the center of the Universe, was a similar sort of organized common sense.

It is safe to say that we all, as readers of this journal, have an interest in behavior analysis. But, do we all have in interest in the science of behavior? Analysis should be seen as a means of achieving the overall goal of a well-developed science of behavior, not as that goal in itself. By breaking the behavioral field down into its components, analysis has certainly made behavior easier to study. Still, these components are not in themselves complete examples of behavior.

In "The Case for Praxics," Epstein (1984) brought the problem to the forefront of discussion in this journal when he proposed separating what he identified as the study of behavior from the rest of psychology. Responses to that proposition (Leigland, 1984; Malagodi & Branch, 1985) have obfuscated the fact that Epstein has a valid point in his argument, which he has since reasserted (Epstein, 1985). Separation of a sort may be appropriate.

A number of researchers find sufficient satisfaction in looking at small components of behavior experimentally. Given that they are not concerned with fitting all the components back into a working system of knowledge, their philosophical orientation is quite different from that of researchers who see synthesis following analysis in a natural scientific order. Considerable conceptual overlap exists, of course, between the all-encompassing systems of Skinner and Kantor and the separatist "Praxics" as proposed by Epstein. The distinctions can be explained in terms of the role given to analysis, as the stated means or goal of the science of behavior.

Indicators of the pervasiveness of the argument as to the proper role of analysis include the following. First, two issues of journals in which behavior scientists publish extensively, *The Psychological Record* (1983) and the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* (1984), have been devoted to articles speculating on the future of behavior analysis. Second, at recent annual meetings of the Association for Behavior Analysis, discussions have been held on the relationship between behavior analysis and psychology. Those behavior scientists calling themselves psychologists have been those who consider behavior analysis a useful investigative tool. Those who call for the type of separation Epstein does view behavior analysis as the ultimate goal of study.

This argument has, in many respects,

been maintained on the wrong level. In "Separate Disciplines: The Study of Behavior and the Study of the Psyche," Fraley and Vargas (1986) have finally brought the pertinent argument around to the wider limits appropriate to the science of behavior, which is related to all of human existence. Fraley and Vargas are correct in saying that the science of behavior must accommodate appropriate philosophy, experimental work, and engineering applications. An argument for anything less is not an argument for a science of behavior.

In making a good case in the broad argument, however, Fraley and Vargas also make two minor errors. They maintain a sentimental, unscientific, attachment to the word "behavior," and they misjudge the necessity of permanent separation from Departments of Psychology to the future of the science of behavior.

After asking what could be wrong in using the word "behavior" as the stem in developing a name for the science of behavior, Fraley and Vargas propose such names as "behaviorology" or "behavology." Unfortunately, these sound like names for a study of etiquette, manners, or comportment. Fraley and Vargas seem to have forgotten very common uses of the word "behavior" that give it a less than scientific tone, when used as they suggest. Additionally, because of its history of misuse and mistreatment among the scientific community, it would not be a good rallying term, no matter how fond of it some of us may be. As a political decision, which is what Fraley and Vargas, Epstein, and others are advocating, independent development of the science of behavior requires a name to which the scientific and nonscientific public will respond strongly and positively.

Epstein (1984) mentioned possible names other than praxics for the science of behavior. One in particular is worth considering, anthroponomy, which was originally proposed by Hunter in 1925. Because it sounds like the name for a basic science, anthroponomy could be more generally acceptable. Its relative unfamiliarity is another reason why it is preferable to psychology, which has its cognitive implications, praxics which is simply awkward and limiting in scope, and behavology or behaviorology for the reasons mentioned above.

Finally, the basic science of behavior, regardless of its name, as a product of the interaction of humans with the surrounding environment encompasses more than psychology. It is impossible for psychologists to have a monopoly on the science of behavior. The development of the science must be drawn from many sources. That will require some developing outside of Departments of Psychology. When the science of behavior is reapplied to psychology, it should only serve to strengthen psychology as a subordinate of the science of behavior.

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